

App. No. 10/825,267
Office Action Dated February 7, 2006

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks. Claims 1, 4, and 7 are hereby amended. Claims 21-23 are new.

Amendment of claim 1 is supported by Figures 2 and 4. Amendments of claims 4 and 7 are supported by the subject matter of claim 20. New claim 21 is supported by the subject matter of claims 4 and 20. New claim 22 is supported by the subject matter of claims 5 and 20. New claim 23 is supported by the subject matter of claims 6 and 20.

Claims 4, 7, and 8 were rejected as being indefinite. The rejection on page 2 of the Action states that "claims 4-7 and 8 are rejected", however since on page 4 of the Action claims 5 and 6 are listed as being allowable and claims 5 and 6 do not depend from claim 4, it is assumed that the Examiner intended to reject claims 4 and 7 (along with dependent claim 8) as being indefinite. Therefore, claims 4 and 7 are amended to address the concerns of the Examiner. Favorable reconsideration of claims 4, 7, and 8 is requested.

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected as being anticipated by Blaufus (US 6,910,847). Applicants traverse this rejection. Blaufus does not disclose a linear moving mechanism including a guide member including a plurality of guide rails extending in parallel to a transport path, and a moving member that extends across the transport path to bridge between the guide rails, as required by claim 1. Rather, Blaufus teaches a single guide rail (104) for supporting a slider (204) that is connected to two arms (110, 120) of a drive mechanism. See Figure 4. Blaufus teaches that a work piece held by a chuck (102) is supported partly by the guide rail (104) and stationary support (105) and partly by the arms (110, 120) of the drive mechanism. Therefore, a heavy work piece would likely cause damage to the drive mechanism.

In contrast, the linear moving mechanism of claim 1 requires a plurality of guide rails and a moving member that bridges between the guide rails. The claimed guide member stably and

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reliably supports the entire weight of a work piece alone, without subjecting a drive mechanism to the weight of the work.

Favorable reconsideration of claims 1 and 2 is requested.

Claims 3, 4, and 9 were rejected as being unpatentable over Blaufus in view of Ishida (US 5,151,008). Applicants traverse this rejection. Claims 3, 4, and 9 should be considered allowable for at least the same reasons as claim 1, from which they depend. Ishida does not remedy the deficiencies of Blaufus, as previously noted. Applicants are not conceding the correctness of the rejection as applied to the rejected claims. Favorable reconsideration of claims 3, 4, and 9 is requested.

New claim 21 should be considered allowable. Claim 21 requires a specific structure (combination of a guide groove formed on the guide member and a vertical shaft carried by the second link arm for fitting in the guide groove) for performing the function required by original claim 4. Neither Blaufus nor Ishida suggests such a structure. Favorable examination of new claim 21 is requested.

New claim 22 should be considered allowable for at least the same reasons as allowed claim 5. Favorable examination of claim 22 is requested.

New claim 23 should be considered allowable for at least the same reasons as allowed claim 6. Favorable examination of claim 22 is requested.

App. No. 10/825,267
Office Action Dated February 7, 2006

In view of the above, favorable reconsideration in the form of a notice of allowance is requested. Any questions regarding this communication can be directed to the attorney of record, Douglas P. Mueller, Reg. No. 30,300, at (612)455-3804.

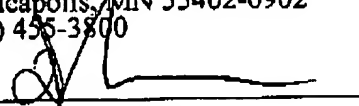


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DPM/mfe

Respectfully submitted,

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